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Ragen Tells Crime Commission How He Would Use Wiretaps

BY EDMUND J. ROONEY

Joseph E. Ragen, director of the state Public Safety Department, said Friday that legalized wiretapping would provide state authorities with an efficient weapon to fight the crime syndicate.

He said that within the last year, his department would have been able to possibly solve 20-25 felonies involving narcotics, arsons, gambling and policy with a wiretap.

Ragen appeared before the Illinois Crime Commission at the start of public hearings to determine whether the state should legalize the tapping of telephones by police.

The hearings will enable the commission "to make a judgment for or against" wiretapping, said Prentice H. Marshall, co-chairman.

The commission was to hear testimony and statements

from a long series of witnesses during the hearing.

RAGEN was accompanied before the commission by two of his top aides—Joseph J. Healy, superintendent of the State Division of Narcotics Control, and John M. Newbold, head of the department's crime section.

Ragen suggested that wiretapping be placed under control of the courts and follow the procedures presently used in obtaining search warrants.

"The court orders would guarantee that wiretapping would not be used indiscriminately or to excess," Ragen said.

SEVERAL cases were cited, but not identified by Ragen, in which "possible details about the time, method and people involved in criminal acts" might have been developed by a wiretap.

He said one case involved the bombing of a business establishment in suburban Cook

County in which the president of the firm received an anonymous call from a man who overheard a conversation about the bombing in a Near North Side hotel.

"If wiretapping were legalized, calls at the named North Side hotel could have been monitored . . . and the persons involved could have been

apprehended and questioned relative to any bombing," Ragen said.